

A guide to providing input on Michigan's Wolf Management Plan

On January 4, 2022, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) opened an online survey to collect input from the public on the future of wolf management in the state. The survey asks for input regarding Michigan's 2015 plan and how it can be improved.

The deadline for completing the survey is January 31, 2022

How to use this guide

In this guide, we provide suggestions for filling out the online survey currently being conducted by the Michigan DNR. For each short answer question, we provide some suggested talking points in blue text. **However, we ask that you please do not copy and paste these talking points verbatim, as the agency is less likely to consider input that is not unique.** Instead, please select some of the talking points to put into your own words, and feel free to include your own thoughts and perspectives as well.

IMPORTANT LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Link to the survey:
https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=h3D71Xc3rUKWaoku9HII0QAX0JXc2oZPmVZUIrPcflhUNihGWFNKRUIhOSTE2WFdLQkwxVFBDR4u&utm_campaign=wolf+management+plan+input&utm_medium=pr&utm_source=go_vdelivery
- Link to the 2015 Wolf Management Plan (Section 5 begins on page 16 and Section 6 begins on page 22):
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/wolf_management_plan_492568_7.pdf
- Link to the 2015 Wolf Management Plan Accomplishments Report:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/wolf_plan_accomplishments_482754_7.pdf
- Additional Resource: www.wolfplanning.org. Here you can find a suite of resources on the best policies and practices for wolf conservation planning and stewardship, based on the best science, democratic processes and inclusivity, and ethics. These products are the result of an intensive collaborative effort by multiple organizations, and a comprehensive vetting process with input and critiques from a broad array of scientists, ethicists, current and retired agency professionals, Tribal biologists and representatives, and academic experts.

The guide

1. How satisfied are you with Goal 1 – Maintain a viable Michigan wolf population above a level that would warrant its classification as threatened or endangered?
 - ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☒ Somewhat dissatisfied

- ☐ Very dissatisfied
2. How satisfied are you with Goal 2 – Facilitate wolf-related benefits?
- ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☒ Somewhat dissatisfied
 - ☐ Very dissatisfied
3. How satisfied are you with Goal 3 – Minimize wolf-related conflicts?
- ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
 - ☒ Very dissatisfied
4. How satisfied are you with Goal 4 – Conduct science-based wolf management with socially acceptable methods?
- ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☒ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
 - ☐ Very dissatisfied

5. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Goals 1, 2, 3 or 4?

Goal 1:

- This definition of a 'viable population' must be updated based on the best available science, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge,¹ and ethics.
- The 2015 plan refers to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1992 *Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf* as the basis for its definition of a viable population of at least 200 wolves. The 1992 plan was written 20 years ago and is based on an outdated understanding of wolves that does not hold true today.
- Instead, the updated plan should strive for a self-sustaining, self-regulating, and genetically diverse wolf population that maintains connectivity with wolf populations in neighboring states and is allowed to fulfill its ecological role.
- The updated plan should continue to not include a maximum number of wolves or a population "goal."

¹ The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) [provides](#) the following explanation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge: "There are multiple definitions of TEK and what information is categorized as such. For GLIFWC, TEK is typically recognized as a subset of the wealth of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin or traditional knowledge. TEK is the process of gathering the knowledge that has been gained from generations of indigenous people's connection and interactions with the environment and that is willingly shared. This knowledge system is based upon direct environmental observations and is typically transmitted orally through aadizookaanan (sacred stories), dibaajimowinan (oral histories), nagamonan (songs), and ceremonies over generations."

Goal 2:

- The first four general categories of benefits identified (ecology, cultural and religious values, interaction with nature, and personal appreciation) are important and should be expanded with additional scientific and ethical considerations. For example, the ecology section could be updated with new information on how wolves help to mitigate the spread of chronic wasting disease. Additionally, the personal appreciation section could also include a discussion of the intrinsic value of wolves.
- The last general category of benefits should be overhauled to reflect current social science and ethics. Wolf hunting and trapping takes away from all of the other benefits identified, goes against the best available science (including social science) and should not be included anywhere in the plan.
- Michigan residents voted twice to not allow hunting and trapping of wolves at the ballot box during the 2014 general election. This mandate by the voters of the state of Michigan should and must be acknowledged and respected by the Michigan DNR.
- Additional information should be added regarding the economic benefit wolves provide by reducing deer-vehicle collisions, as evidenced by new research out of Wisconsin.

Goal 3:

- This section should be updated to include current science, which demonstrates that non-lethal deterrents and changes to livestock husbandry practices are much more effective at *preventing* conflicts between livestock and wolves than killing wolves. Furthermore, current science finds that killing wolves can actually increase conflicts.
- This section should also include a discussion of recent studies that show that allowing the hunting and trapping of wolves actually decreases social tolerance for them.
- Additionally, this section should include an accurate representation of conflicts in Michigan. In 2020, just 5 of the more than 900 livestock farms in the UP had verified conflicts with wolves.
- This section should include a discussion of how to prevent conflicts between hunting dogs and wolves (e.g. not allowing bear hounds near wolf dens or rendezvous sites, not allowing hounds near bear bait sites, etc.) as well as a plan for educating bear hunters about these necessary conflict prevention steps.

Goal 4:

- In addition to social science considerations, ethical considerations must be included in wolf conservation planning. Science and social values should be integrated with experts' contributions from the natural and social sciences on the ethics issues surrounding wolf conservation, recovery, and management.

6. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.1 – Increase public awareness and understanding of wolves and wolf-related issues – and its associated objectives?
 - 6.1.1 – Coordinate with management partners to develop and implement a wolf-based information and education program.
 - 6.1.2 – Provide timely and professional responses to information requests.

6.1.3 – Support training opportunities for staff and management partners involved in the wolf-based information and education program.

6.1.4 – Evaluate the effectiveness of the wolf-based information and education program.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ✓ ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

7. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.1 or its associated objectives?

- In addition to providing timely and professional responses to information requests, efforts should be made to ensure important information is readily available on the DNR's website. For example, providing regular reports on population size, wolf mortality, and conflicts with livestock (including providing information on what, if any, non-lethal methods were in place for wolves killed "in the act" of wounding or killing livestock).

8. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.2 – Maintain active research and monitoring programs to support science-based wolf management – and its associated objectives?

6.2.1 – Monitor the abundance of wolves in Michigan.

6.2.2 – Monitor the health of wolves in Michigan.

6.2.3 – Investigate biological and social factors relevant to wolf management.

6.2.4 – Coordinate with partners to support a wolf research program.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ✓ ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

9. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.2 or its associated objectives?

- The best available science should be used to inform wolf management and should be defined as science that is current, measurable, consistent, peer-reviewed, and evidence-based, together with Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge must be considered alongside Western science. The two share many similarities, including a focus on empirical observation, pattern recognition, knowledge organization, and many other commonalities. Decision-makers should draw on the combined strengths of both Western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to effectively conserve wolves and educate the public.
- Additional important areas of research that should be conducted in ways that meet this definition of best available science should include the causes of wolf mortality and threats to their survival (including the killing of wolves for purported livestock conflict deterrence, poaching, disease, and vehicle collisions), monitoring of wolf populations and prey

populations, the ways that wolves use and move across their habitat on a landscape scale and the potential for the building of wildlife crossings and protection of corridors to facilitate habitat connectivity and genetic diversity, and threats to existing wolf habitat.

- Science does not exist in a vacuum and decisions about wolf conservation and management cannot be made by looking at science alone. Instead, we also have to examine our value judgements and systems of thinking. Ethical considerations are complementary to the use of the best available science and must be included in the updated plan.

10. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.3 – Enact and enforce regulations necessary to maintain a viable wolf population – and its associated objectives?

6.3.1 – Ensure adequate legal protection for wolves.

6.3.2 – Inform the public on regulations pertaining to wolves.

6.3.3 – Investigate and penalize violations of wolf regulations.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

11. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.3 or its associated objectives?

- It is crucial that those regulations pertaining to wolves are aligned with the goal of wolf stewardship and conservation, rather than simply focusing on arbitrary numerical thresholds that are rooted in outdated science.
- Wolf regulations and the penalties for not complying with them must also reflect the intrinsic value of wolves. Wolves have rich social and family lives, are extremely intelligent, and depend on one another for survival. Studies show that killing a single wolf can cause a whole pack to fall apart. Furthermore, social science and Michigan's voting record demonstrate that Michiganders care about wolves and want them protected.
- Because we know wolves are deeply valued, have intrinsic value, and self-regulate their own populations, we have a duty to integrate ethical considerations in the policies we develop for wolves and the penalty for breaking them.
- Every effort must be made to inform the public about these policies and regulations and also educate as to why these policies are appropriate and necessary.
- Recent studies have shown that when protections for wolves are taken away, it can cause an increase in poaching and other violations of existing laws and regulations. For example, recent scholarship out of Wisconsin has shown that reducing protections for wolves led to an increase in the poaching of them.
 - Poaching of wolves remains a concern in Michigan, and according to the DNR, illegal killing of wolves in the state accounted for 41% of radio-collared wolf mortality from 1999 through 2014. Such

evidence makes clear the importance of effective regulation enforcement.

12. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.4 – Maintain sustainable populations of wolf prey – and its associated objective?

6.4.1 – Maintain prey populations required to provide for sustainable human uses and a viable wolf population.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

13. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.4 and its associated objective?

- In general, this section (like most others) needs to be updated with current, peer-reviewed science that reflects a modern understanding of wolf-prey relationships.

14. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.5 – Maintain habitat necessary to sustain a viable wolf population – and its associated objectives?

6.5.1 – Maintain habitat necessary to sustain adequate levels of wolf prey.

6.5.2 – Maintain habitat linkages to allow wolf dispersal.

6.5.3 – Minimize disturbance at known active wolf den sites.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

15. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.5 and its associated objectives?

- In addition to generally updating the science referenced in this section, there should also be a discussion of ways to limit disturbance at wolf den sites caused by bear hunting dogs.

16. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.6 – Monitor and manage adverse effects of diseases and parasite on the viability of the wolf population – and its associated objectives?

6.6.1 – Monitor the health of wolves in Michigan

6.6.2 – Assess the need to manage diseases and parasites in the wolf population.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

17. Is there anything you would like to see changed with Strategy 6.6 and its associated objectives?

- Again, just a general update of the science referenced. The only studies cited are from 1981 and 2003.

18. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.7 – Achieve compatibility between wolf distribution and abundance and social carrying capacity – and its associated objectives?

6.7.1 – Promote consistent public understanding and appreciation of the benefits and costs associated with particular wolf levels.

6.7.2 – Manage wolf-related interactions to increase public tolerance for wolves.

6.7.3 – Manage wolf distribution and abundance as necessary to maintain positive and negative wolf-related interactions at socially acceptable levels.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☒ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

19. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.7 and its associated objectives?

- The social science used to guide this section must be updated to reflect a current understanding of social attitudes and values toward wolves. Most of the studies cited are from the 1980s and 1990s, with one study from 2006.
- Part of this update should include a discussion of recent studies that indicate that removing protections for wolves (such as through allowing hunting seasons) actually decreases social tolerance, as evidenced by an increase in wolf poaching.
- Another important update to discuss in this section is that Michigan voters twice voted not to allow wolf hunting during the 2014 general election.
- In addition to social science, ethics should also play a role in wolf management decisions.

20. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.8 – Facilitate positive wolf-human interactions and other wolf-related benefits – and its associated objectives?

6.8.1 – Inform the public on benefits derived from the presence of wolves.

6.8.2 – Maintain a distribution and abundance of wolves adequate to maintain benefits at levels acceptable to the public.

6.8.3 – Promote opportunities for people to experience and appreciate wolves.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

21. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.8 and its associated objectives?

- Under Section 6.8.2, it should be noted that Michigan's wolf population has remained relatively stable over the last decade and conflicts with wolves remain rare.
22. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.9 – Manage actual and perceived threats to human safety posed by wolves – and its associated objectives?
- 6.9.1 – Promote accurate public perceptions of the human-safety risks posed by wolves.
- 6.9.2 – Provide timely and professional responses to reports of human-safety risks posed by wolves.
- 6.9.3 – Minimize the incidence of rabies in wild and domestic populations.
- 6.9.4 – Promote accurate public perceptions of the human-safety risks posed by echinococcosis.
- 6.9.5 – Prevent or minimize the habituation of wolves.
- 6.9.6 – Eliminate actual human-safety threats where they occur.
- ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☒ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
 - ☐ Very dissatisfied
23. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.9 and its associated objectives?
- Under 6.9.1, rather than simply providing "prompt responses to requests for information regarding wolves and human safety," this information should be readily available on the DNR's website.
24. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.10 – Manage wolf depredation of domestic animals – and its associated objectives?
- 6.10.1 – Provide timely and professional responses to reports of suspected wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.2 – Minimize the risk of wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.3 – Eliminate or minimize ongoing wolf depredation of domestic animals.
- 6.10.4 – Develop a program to allow livestock producers to control depredating wolves on their property.
- 6.10.5 – Facilitate financial compensation for livestock losses caused by wolves.
- 6.10.6 – Work with partners to discontinue compensation for privately owned cervids lost to wolves
- ☐ Very satisfied
 - ☐ Somewhat satisfied
 - ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - ☒ Somewhat dissatisfied
 - ☐ Very dissatisfied
25. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.10 and its associated objectives?
- Words matter. The word "depredation" should be removed from this section (and throughout the plan) and replaced with "predation," as "depredation" is generally defined as "an act of attacking or plundering,

pillaging and marauding; robbery; etc.”—in other words it connotes violence and malice. In contrast, “predation” refers to a biological process of one animal preying upon another for food.

- This section should be updated with new studies that show that liberalizing wolf killing can actually decrease social tolerance for wolves and lead to an increase in poaching.
- This section should be updated with more recent social science, as well as an accurate representation of the rarity of conflicts between wolves and domestic animals and current science that shows that non-lethal deterrents are more effective at preventing conflicts than killing wolves.
- This section should include efforts to minimize conflicts between hunting dogs and wolves, such as not allowing the use of hunting dogs near known wolf dens or rendezvous sites. Killing wolves in areas where wolves and free-ranging hunting dogs have come into conflict should not be allowed.
- Information about investigations into suspected livestock-wolf conflict should be made readily available on the DNR’s website, with any identifying information redacted.

26. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.11 – Minimize the negative impacts of captive wolves and wolf-dog hybrids – and its associated objectives?

6.11.1 – Minimize and deter the possession of captive wolves in Michigan.

6.11.2 – Minimize and deter the possession of wolf-dog hybrids in Michigan.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☒ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

27. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.11 and its associated objectives?

- The updated plan should continue to support prohibitions against the private ownership of wolves or wolf-dog hybrids.

28. How satisfied are you with Strategy 6.12 – Develop socially and biologically responsible management recommendations regarding public harvest of wolves – and its associated objectives?

6.12.1 – Develop recommendations regarding public wolf harvest for the purpose of reducing wolf-related conflicts.

6.12.2 – Develop recommendations regarding public wolf harvest for reasons other than managing wolf-related conflicts.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☒ Very dissatisfied

29. Is there anything you would like to see changed in Strategy 6.12 and its associated objectives?

- Wolf hunting and trapping goes against the best available science, public values, and ethics.
- Studies show that hunting and trapping will not solve already rare conflicts with livestock and could actually make conflicts worse.
- Studies also show that allowing wolf hunting and trapping can decrease social tolerance for wolves and increase poaching.
- Michigan voters voted twice to not allow wolf hunting and trapping during the 2014 general election.
- All Michiganders, regardless of where they live, derive benefits from having wolves on the landscape and should have an equal say in how they are managed.

30. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for the 2022 update of the 2015 Wolf Management Plan?

- The DNR has the opportunity to develop an updated plan based on the best available science, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, ethics, and the values of all Michiganders, that supports a healthy, genetically diverse, socially stable, and self-regulating wolf population.
- Wolf hunting and/or trapping seasons go against these common goals and should not be considered in the updated plan.
- As a whole, the plan must be updated with current, peer-reviewed science. Few of the studies cited in Sections 5 and 6 were published less than 15 years ago.